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Annual report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21)

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the United Nations Statistical Commission a progress report prepared by the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21). The report provides the United Nations Statistical Commission with an update on the work of PARIS 21, the programme of workshops and the activities and outputs of the task teams, including the completion of the report on indicators of statistical capacity-building. The report also notes future plans, including the evaluation of the achievements of PARIS 21 planned for 2003.

The Commission may wish:

(a) To note the progress of PARIS 21 to date and the impending evaluation of the initiative;

(b) To comment on its future direction and forward programme;

(c) To review the indicators of statistical capacity-building.

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Annual report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21)

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The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21) exists to boost statistical capabilities, especially in poor developing countries, by promoting a culture for setting and monitoring policy based on evidence, and fostering well-managed national statistical systems that use resources effectively. It is a unique forum providing for dialogue between users and producers of statistics. It works through:

Partnership: bringing together donors and governments in support of country-owned development strategies

Advocacy: to demonstrate the power and use of statistics for policy decisions

Resource: mobilization to be able to collect the right information for policy-making

Information: exchange to share knowledge and foster coordination

Strategies: to build sustainable statistical capacity, by better use of data as a tool for more effective development.

Its membership is worldwide. Members are from Governments, international organizations, professional bodies and academic institutions. They have practical experience and wish to collaborate to improve policy-making through reliable, pertinent statistics.

I. Background

1. PARIS 21 was launched at a meeting in Paris in November 1999 in response to an Economic and Social Council resolution on rationalizing and improving statistics and indicators. The first annual progress report of PARIS 21 was presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session (see E/CN.3/2001/24).[1] The second annual progress report was presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session (see E/CN.3/2002/19).[2] The Statistical Commission welcomed in particular the regional approach taken by PARIS 21 and asked that the statistical capacity indicators being developed by a PARIS 21 task team be presented to the Statistical Commission for review.

II. Goals, outputs and evaluation

2. The PARIS 21 goals are to contribute to more effective poverty reduction and improved transparency, accountability and effectiveness of governance in developing and transition countries, inter alia, to help achieve the millennium development goals. PARIS 21 partnership principles recognize that the people and Governments of developing and transition countries make the most important contribution to development. They emphasize the need for country ownership and leadership, shared long-term international and local commitment and better coordinated technical cooperation.

3. The consortium has now been operating for three years. By the end of 2003, it should have completed its regional programme to raise awareness and promote action in most developing and transition countries. The initiative is to be independently evaluated in early 2003. The evaluators will interview stakeholders in the north and the south to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the initiative and report on the lessons learned and to propose an updated strategy for the work of the initiative beyond 2003.

4. A challenge for PARIS 21, noted at its October consortium meeting, is to bring about a better integration of its activities with development partners, particularly those not normally engaged in statistical capacity-building. There is still a tendency for statistics to be considered as a technical matter only, and for the statistics required to monitor development progress to be considered in isolation, rather than as an integral part of all programmes. The future programme will include:

- An annual report on progress in statistical capacity-building in the developing world, including current initiatives and challenges. This will draw the attention of development partners and the general public to the wider picture on progress in statistics;
- The promotion of the use of statistical capacity-building indicators as a management tool for strategic planning and implementation both at the national and international levels;
- Further development of the advocacy programme of films, newsletters and materials demonstrating good practice in using statistics in development processes;
- The sponsoring of high-level events to highlight the place and value of statistics for key development issues, such as the millennium development goals and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs);
- Checklists and manuals of good practice in improving the policy relevance of statistics in developing countries, using materials developed by task teams and workshops

5. PARIS 21 has continued its work in creating synergy and communication between the activities of those involved in building capacity in statistics and those needing to use its products. PARIS 21 operates through:

- Task teams working at the global level and convened by partner PARIS 21 agencies. These produce the tools and synthesize the knowledge for use by the partners of PARIS 21;
- Subregional PARIS 21 workshops for developing and transition countries worldwide, to develop better user-producer dialogue and to agree individual country outline plans of improvement.

III. Activities

A. Task teams

6. PARIS 21 has five active task teams and one proposed team that bring together, under a volunteer convenor, professionals interested in particular aspects of

statistical capacity-building. Task team members comprise experts from international agencies, donor organizations and from developing and transition countries.

B. Indicators of statistical capacity-building

7. The statistical capacity-building indicators task team, convened by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has developed a test consisting of 34 indicators (16 quantitative and 18 qualitative) collected by means of a questionnaire, to provide a snapshot of a country's statistical capacity. The objective was to develop generic indicators that would be internationally comparable. This work has been tested in two countries and will be piloted fully over the coming months. A summary version of the full task team report is contained in the annex.

C. Strategic statistical development plans

8. The strategic statistical development plan task team has identified country experiences and best practices for the formulation of national statistical development plans, making use of existing frameworks, such as the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS). The team will place material on the PARIS 21 web site to assist countries in taking full advantage of the initiatives available.

D. Census

9. The census task team has studied the problems of financing censuses from both developing country and donor perspectives and has considered strategies for reducing census costs. Its conclusions are available in a paper presented at a symposium in 2001.[3] Further work will explore opportunities for improving the efficiency of censuses and their contribution to the statistics needed for monitoring the PRSPs and the millennium development goals.

E. Rural and agricultural statistics

10. The rural and agricultural statistics task team started work in 2001 to advocate for greater visibility of food, agriculture and rural statistics (FARS) within the overall system of national statistics. The team, convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), works on mobilizing resources; exchanging innovative experiences and practices; cost-effective methodologies; and promoting stakeholder coordination. The team reviewed its work in 2002 and agreed on a regional project proposal to attract multi-agency support.[4] The work is expected to concentrate on Africa initially, but plans to extend to other regions at a later date.

F. Improving statistical support for monitoring development goals

11. A new task team, co-convened by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) and the World Bank and approved by the PARIS 21

Steering Committee in June 2002, will identify, through case studies, the additional actions required to achieve coherence in the statistics for measuring, monitoring and managing development results by identifying specific gaps in national statistical processes and inconsistencies that may exist between national and international requirements.

G. Tools and methods

12. "Tools and methods" was another new task team approved by the PARIS 21 Steering Committee in October 2002. This team will develop and document tools related to the statistics needed for monitoring development policy. The first proposal under this team would be to develop proper methods and tools for assessing multidimensional aspects of poverty as well as for measuring progress towards the development goals, such as quality and efficiency of governance and rights-based development. The team would serve as the "Montreux Group on statistics and indicators of human rights", would report on these issues to the United Nations Statistical Commission and would serve as the advisory board of the project "Methods and tools for assessing governance through reporting and analysis" (METAGORA).

IV. Regional workshops and follow-up

13. By November 2002, PARIS 21 had held four subregional workshops; a further nine are planned before the end of 2003. Regional workshops are the start of a process for improving the policy relevance of statistics by developing the dialogue between the key users of the statistical system and the managers of statistical production in developing and transition countries. During the workshops, country stakeholders agree on action plans for subsequent implementation.

A. Workshop follow-up

14. The regional workshops so far have provided a fruitful environment for relating the output of statistical systems to the priorities of policy makers and initiating strategic planning processes for statistical systems. The policy environment of poverty reduction strategies and monitoring of the millennium development goals are creating a greater demand for statistics among stakeholders. This demand is for statistics traditionally provided by national statistical offices and for newer kinds of information, such as governance indicators and government expenditure tracking as well as a refocus on statistics derived from management information systems in sector ministries.

15. The workshops have led to requests for PARIS 21 assistance at the country level. The active participation of senior policy makers in workshops has ensured the delivery of sustainable outputs, with workshop recommendations followed up and implemented by national Governments. Support for countries that request follow-up to the workshops is organized in a variety of ways: some through traditional suppliers of technical assistance, some from subregional organizations and some through PARIS 21 facilitating national events or enabling countries to access expertise from the region, often supported by donor agencies or trust funds.

16. So far a number of countries have embarked on statistical planning and dissemination activities with facilitation from PARIS 21. Subregional experience sharing has been a key input from PARIS 21 in supporting change strategies for country statistical systems. PARIS 21 has facilitated support in a variety of ways:

- Initiating subregional dialogue between decision makers and statistics producers about the use of statistics in the current policy context. This results in peer pressure to initiate change and increases awareness of local expertise. Countries have already developed south-south cooperation arrangements under their own auspices, or by using sponsorship from regional or donor agencies;
- Increasing country awareness of the policy environment for statistics and demonstrating good practice in meeting the requirements;
- Making experts from neighbouring countries in the region available for advocacy to decision makers or to support change or planning processes;
- Improving liaison between countries and donors to ensure better synergy in support of country-led initiatives, and providing expertise when requested by countries or their partners;
- Linking country workshops to local processes, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Campaign for the Millennium Development Goals.

B. Forward programme

17. A programme of nine workshops will be co-organized with appropriate subregional and national bodies (see table below) and follow-up actions from workshops facilitated in a number of countries. Knowledge and advocacy material from task team activities will be made accessible to partners in the consortium and used in PARIS 21 activities. A programme for systematic outreach to non-statistician development partners will be undertaken during the year which will include high-level events and an annual report on the progress of statistical capacity-building in developing and transition countries.

Programme of subregional workshops

Subregional	*Date*
Central Africa	4th quarter 2002
West Africa I	1st quarter 2003
West Africa II	1st quarter 2003
Central America	1st quarter 2003
Caribbean	2nd quarter 2003
South Asia	1st quarter 2003
East and Central Asia	2nd quarter 2003
Pacific islands	3rd quarter 2003
Arab States	2nd quarter 2003

C. Advocacy

18. Using material filmed in workshops and supplemented by interviews with well-known political advocates for statistics, a video entitled "Measuring the Change in World Poverty" has been made (write to contact@paris21.org to obtain a free copy). In addition, the "Why Statistics?" web site (www.odysseus.it/sfabw/HomePage.html) consists of statistical advocacy reference material. It offers information on setting national statistical system priorities, data quality and financing statistical activities.

D. Web site

19. PARIS 21 makes extensive use of its web site (www.paris21.org) as a communication and publicity tool. The site provides access to presentations and reports from workshops, task team information, country statistical initiatives, details on upcoming meetings and links to other relevant statistical sites.

E. Newsletter

20. PARIS 21 launched a newsletter in April 2002. The newsletter is a means to report on PARIS 21 activities and serves as a forum for dialogue among PARIS 21 consortium members and beyond. Features include reports on regional and country workshops and task team activities as well as links to online resources. The reaction of readers has been positive. Three issues per year are anticipated.

V. Points for discussion

21. The Statistical Commission is invited:

(a) To note the progress of PARIS 21 to date and the impending evaluation of the initiative;

(b) To comment on its future direction and forward programme;

(c) To review the indicators of statistical capacity-building.

Notes

[1] The documents for the thirty-second session of the Statistical Commission are available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2001.htm.

[2] The documents for the thirty-third session of the Statistical Commission are available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/sc2002.htm.

[3] *Population and Housing Censuses, A Funding Crisis?*, presented by the United Nations Population Fund to an International Symposium on Population and Housing Censuses organized by the United Nations Statistics Division in New York, 7-10 August 2001 (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demog/docs/symposium_04.htm).

[4] *Proposal for Strengthening Agricultural and Rural Statistics Systems in Support of Rural Poverty Reduction and Food Security in Africa.*

Annex

Overview of PARIS 21 statistical capacity-building indicators

1. In May 2001, PARIS 21 set up the task team on statistical capacity-building indicators to develop indicators that would help track progress of countries in building their statistical capacity. The present annex is a summary of the final report[a] of the task team presented at the PARIS 21 consortium meeting in October 2002.

2. While devising indicators was neither a quick nor a simple task, the importance of monitoring statistical development kept driving the team's efforts forward. The indicators had to be distilled from complex statistical processes performed by a large and diverse number of data-producing agencies that differ from one country to another. Devising statistical capacity-building indicators entailed focusing on the variables relevant to statistical production while ensuring that the information for the indicators could reasonably be provided without undue burden. This meant that the indicators needed to be concise and yet clear to produce. They had to provide for a bird's-eye view of the situation, and this meant limiting their number. At the same time, they had to portray a sufficiently representative picture of the statistical conditions to permit comparison across data sets. They needed to provide a reading that could track changes in conditions over time. Finally, for international comparability purposes, they also needed to be the same from one country to another and to be made available to the international community.

3. The team first worked to build a common vision on what statistical capacity and the building of such capacity entailed. It exploited extensively the rich statistical literature, discussed members' experience in statistical capacity-building and consulted with donor agencies. An international seminar was also convened at IMF in April 2002 to seek the views of 20 Governments with experience in statistical capacity-building. The team met on three occasions (May and September 2001 and April 2002), with intensive work carried out between meetings, and recruited three respected international consultants to help identify and test indicators.

The statistical capacity-building indicators

4. This process led to a group of statistical capacity-building indicators: 16 quantitative indicators and 18 qualitative indicators.

5. The *quantitative* indicators cover resources (domestically and externally funded annual budget, staff and equipment), inputs (surveys and administrative sources) and statistical products. The resource indicators are intended to show the extent of success in obtaining funding both from government and external donors, data sources and human resources. They indicate the bargaining position in obtaining valued resources and the ability to use resources in the production process to achieve performance. These quantitative indicators provide a rough idea of the depth and breadth of statistical activities.

6. Their usefulness is limited, however, as benchmarks against which the values of the indicators can be assessed do not exist. Furthermore, the output indicators do not measure effectiveness, since they do not show to what extent the statistics are effectively used. Nor do the resource indicators provide for efficiency measures,

because the amount of resources used cannot be readily related to all required characteristics of the statistical outputs. The quantitative indicators need to be viewed within the context of how the statistical activities are carried out, as measured by the qualitative indicators that serve more as measures of efficiency and effectiveness of statistical production.

7. The *qualitative* indicators embrace the broader view of factors in the statistical environment, the statistical process and the characteristics of the statistical products in meeting users' needs. They help to show the following: (a) if the legal and institutional environment facilitates the production of the statistics; (b) if the resources are sufficient and the activities meshed to promote productivity; (c) if the culture is amenable to quality work; (d) if integrity and professionalism are protected and transparency measures are in place; (e) if the core statistical processes are performed according to methodological requirements and the source data available and techniques used are adequate; (f) if measures are in place to maintain the relevancy of the products; and (g) if the characteristics of the statistics produced fit users' needs. Each indicator is evaluated against a four-scale assessment level, to which are attached benchmark descriptions: level 4 applies to highly developed statistical activities; level 3 to moderately well-developed activities; level 2 to activities that are developing but still have many deficiencies; and level 1 to activities that are underdeveloped. The ratings were designed with a view that a rating of 3 or 4 would refer to activities that would require no external support.

Compilation of the statistical capacity-building indicators

8. The indicators come in the form of a questionnaire to be completed by data producers. The questionnaire is made up of a table that contains the indicators, along with the relevant instructions for providing the information. The table was designed to serve as both a collection and a dissemination device, with minimal editing required between these two functions.

9. The indicators can be compiled for internal management purposes and/or for international comparability purposes. As a management tool, the producers can apply the quantitative indicators to the data-producing agency under review, and the qualitative indicators to the data being targeted. The results will provide data producers with an overview of the capacity of the agency to produce the statistics in question.

10. For comparative purposes, the indicators need to be common from one country to another, and three measurement levels were selected. The first level, the system-wide indicators, consists in identifying for a country the statistics produced, inclusive of the year of reference, along with the identification of the producing agencies. The second level, agency-related indicators, consists in applying the quantitative indicators to the agency(ies) responsible for producing the gross domestic product (GDP), the population and the household income and expenditure statistics, whereas the last level, the data related indicators, involves applying the qualitative indicators to GDP, population and household income and expenditure.

11. An experimental period is suggested for the statistical capacity-building indicators in order to provide time for data producers to become familiar with the indicators, for PARIS 21 to promote the indicators with the data-producing agency

in charge of coordinating statistics in a country and for the indicators to be firmed up as lessons are learned from their application.

Concluding notes

12. While generally applicable to countries in all stages of statistical development, the statistical capacity-building indicators could be more specifically useful to countries that are "statistically challenged", that is, countries whose statistical systems are not sustainable, as evidenced by their extensive reliance on external assistance.

13. By providing a snapshot reading of these countries' statistical circumstances, the statistical capacity-building indicators should help them in identifying strengths and weaknesses, in planning towards specific goals and in monitoring the activities leading to these goals.

14. The statistical capacity-building indicators can also facilitate communication and coordination among the organizations involved in technical assistance. By providing common measuring rods of countries' statistical capacity needs, they can help to shed further light on the statistical circumstances of countries, providing a means to share results systematically, and presenting a comparative view of statistical capacity-building from one country to another. Furthermore, the indicators can track statistical development over time and, hence, provide the donor community with an additional means to account for its technical assistance.

15. The statistical capacity-building indicators can be viewed as a promising beginning with the intent of further promoting a climate where the statistical information becomes an essential support for national policies and good governance.

16. The final report of the statistical capacity-building indicators task team, including the questionnaire and the benchmark descriptions of data-related indicators can be found at http://www.paris21.org/htm/TT_Indicators.htm.

Notes

[a] http://www.PARIS21.org/htm/task/scbi/scbifnlrpt.pdf.

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Report of the inter-agency meeting on coordination of statistical activities

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the inter-agency meeting on coordination of statistical activities, held in New York from 17 to 19 September 2002. The report is transmitted in accordance with a request of the Commission at its thirty-third session.** In response to the request of the Commission to develop a new system for effective coordination given that the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities had been disbanded as at 31 December 2001, the meeting participants decided to establish a Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, the functioning of which is set out in section L and annex IV below. The Commission may wish to take into account in its discussion under relevant agenda items the views expressed at the meeting. A list of the relevant agenda items and paragraphs of the present report follows:

* E/CN.3/2003/1.
** *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), para. 80 (c) and (d).

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Report of the inter-agency meeting on coordination of statistical activities

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I. Introduction

1. The inter-agency meeting on coordination of statistical activities was held in New York from 17 to 19 September 2002. The agenda is contained in annex I below, the list of participants in annex II and the list of documents in annex III.

II. Work of the inter-agency meeting on coordination of statistical activities

A. Opening of the meeting

2. In opening the meeting, Hermann Habermann, Director of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, explained that the Division had called the meeting because the Statistical Commission had stressed the need for international organizations to strengthen the coordination of their statistical activities and had requested the international organizations to develop a new system for effective coordination, given that the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities had been disbanded as at 31 December 2001. Furthermore, he noted that consultations among chief statisticians from the United Nations agencies and international organizations had shown that there was broad support for holding such a meeting. He informed representatives of international agencies that the report of the meeting would be presented to the Statistical Commission. Moreover, matters that required the attention of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) or policy guidance would be presented to the CEB High-level Committee on Programmes.

B. Election of the Chairman

3. Andrew Flatt of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was elected as Chairman of the meeting.

C. Adoption of the agenda

4. The meeting participants adopted the agenda as set out in annex I.

D. Treatment of unfinished business of the former Subcommittee on Statistical Activities

5. It was decided at the meeting that the following two subjects were important and should be included in any future work plan that might be developed:

(a) Good citation practices in the outputs of international statistical offices (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO));

(b) The collection of disaggregated statistics by international organizations (including the uses of disaggregated statistics and the reporting burdens on countries) (United Nations Children's Fund).

E. Improving the quality of data used for indicators for the millennium development goals and targets

6. The oral report presented by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the global reporting process for the millennium development goals was welcomed. Some agencies expressed concern regarding the selection and relevance of the indicators for some targets, especially in areas where data quality and availability were a serious problem; in particular, some agencies voiced concern that real change in the indicators would be confounded with changes resulting from revisions and improvements of the data. The problem would be particularly acute when examining annual differences. The meeting participants stressed the importance of building national capacity in order for countries to be able to produce the data necessary for national monitoring of the millennium development goals and to provide data to the international community for global monitoring.

7. Various participants in the meeting stated that the coordinated process led by the Statistics Division for the completion of the 2002 report on the millennium development goals had been successful and that its momentum should be maintained. The meeting supported the idea of having further inter-agency expert group meetings to ensure full participation and effective coordination among partner agencies.

8. The meeting took note of the Division's concern about the need for global reporting to be based on common regional groupings. Agencies designated to provide data on millennium development goal indicators reconfirmed their willingness to provide regional figures on the basis of the *Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistics Use*[1] to the extent possible. Agencies also agreed on the importance of comprehensive authoritative metadata in the presentation of indicators.

F. Issues relating to the assessment of the quality of statistical data in developing countries

9. The meeting took note of the report prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the quality of statistical data in developing countries and shared experiences regarding the agency's efforts to improve reporting and the quality of those data. The following issues were highlighted:

(a) The need to develop close partnerships between international agencies and reporting national offices;

(b) The need to continue efforts to request and standardize metadata information;

(c) The need to improve coordination among national agencies involved in data reporting using mechanisms such as the General Data Dissemination System;

(d) The need to strengthen statistical capacity to produce better data for users at the national and international levels;

(e) The need to improve the transfer of technology to facilitate the flow of data at lower cost for both countries and international organizations.

The meeting took note of the use of incentives by international organizations for the collection of national data, however, it expressed concern at the demands by some countries for payment in exchange for data.

G. Quality assurance for statistics in international statistical services

10. The meeting welcomed the comprehensive analysis of this topic contained in the paper presented by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Several international agencies shared their experiences with quality assurance procedures, indicating that most discrepancies between national and international figures as well as between international sources are explainable, as they are often the result of different methods of compilation and estimation. However, the meeting agreed that more transparency about all methods applied is needed, and agencies committed themselves to reviewing, in particular, their web pages accordingly, making their own corporate quality assessment procedures more transparent. In this context, it was also noted that international organizations made frequent use of, and should in fact adhere to, the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. While the exchange on quality assurance was considered useful, it was recognized that there were limits to harmonizing such procedures across agencies, although the meeting welcomed joint activity in this area between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) and encouraged other agencies to adopt consistent terminology and concepts to the extent possible.

H. Reducing duplication of data collection from countries

11. The meeting took note of the oral update given by the Deputy Director of the Statistics Division on steps undertaken to address the specific concerns raised by some Member States on duplication of data collection. All agencies involved, in particular lead agencies designated for a particular problem area, assured the Division of their full cooperation in the preparation of a comprehensive report on this issue for the thirty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, to be held in 2003.

I. Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter

12. International agencies shared their experiences with joint data collection and common data sets. It was recognized that the examples mentioned in the note by the Statistics Division (SA/2002/8) were indeed examples of problem areas. Access to water and sanitation, exchange rates and child mortality data were cited as further examples where discrepancies existed. There was agreement that discrepancies in disseminated data series are best addressed and solved on a bilateral or trilateral basis with the directly concerned parties involved. Therefore, while not concurring with the specific suggestions for action made in paragraph 4 of the document, the meeting participants agreed that this was an important item that should remain on the agenda.

J. Coordination in the field of health statistics

13. The meeting welcomed the oral presentation made by the World Health Organization (WHO) on its ongoing initiatives, including consultations with countries to improve the validity and reliability of measures, the strengthening of data reporting, providing countries with new tools for measurement, the launching of the World Health Survey and the strengthening of vital registration systems.

14. The meeting participants expressed concern about the overlap of the World Health Survey programme with other ongoing survey initiatives at the international and national levels. It also raised questions about the sustainability of the programme at the country level. The meeting recognized the existing problem of coordination at the country level, where WHO works with its mandated counterpart, the Ministry of Health, with little involvement of the national statistical office, and welcomed the intention of WHO to improve in-country coordination.

15. The meeting also emphasized the need to improve the exchange of information on health statistics at the international level and welcomed the intention of WHO to intensify cooperation between agencies in this area. In particular, WHO agreed to designate a focal point on statistical matters and to attend the meeting of the EUROSTAT Task Force on Health and Health-related Interview Survey Data on 2 and 3 October 2002.

K. Information items

1. Major new initiatives planned by organizations

16. The meeting took note of new initiatives planned by IMF, FAO, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), as highlighted in the reports submitted by the respective bodies (SA/2002/10 and Add. 1-3). It also took note of oral presentations under this item, in particular:

(a) The description by OECD of the glossary of statistical terms currently being developed;

(b) The initiatives of UNESCO regarding statistics in the areas of science, culture, telecommunications and education, with a focus on improving data on early childhood and informal education;

(c) The development of a methodological framework for "decent work" by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

2. Issues related to the work of the task forces and intersecretariat working groups

17. The meeting took note of the reports submitted by the Task Force on Finance Statistics and the Task Force on International Trade Statistics, as well as by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics. In particular, the meeting was informed that the Task Force on Finance Statistics was putting forward proposals for further methodological work. The meeting also took note of the oral reports presented by the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services and the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, in particular its intention to review the current procedures for updating the 1993 System of National Accounts.

3. Programme review of service statistics for the Statistical Commission, 2003

18. The meeting welcomed the progress report on the review of service statistics, which was prepared by OECD with input from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It shared the concern of the authors about the underrepresentation of developing countries in the Voorburg Group. It also considered such proposals as increasing sponsorship of developing country representatives in Voorburg Group meetings, holding such meetings in developing countries, inviting comments on draft recommendations and guidelines, to be located on the web site, and involving existing regional statistical committees. Those proposals were considered useful in strengthening the participation of developing countries in any city group.

4. Coordination of development indicators in the context of follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

19. The meeting took note of the activities of the Statistics Division to follow up on the recommendations of the Statistical Commission on development indicators, in particular the formation of a standing advisory committee of national experts.

5. Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission

20. The meeting noted that, under other agenda items, the necessary collaboration on preparations for the thirty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission had been covered, namely, work on national accounts, international merchandise trade statistics, statistics of international trade in services, programme review of services, finance statistics, price statistics, coordination of development indicators and duplication of requests to countries for statistics. The meeting received an update on the work on the International Comparison Programme and on plans for an expert group meeting on the scope of social statistics and the expected reporting on those subjects to the Statistical Commission.

21. With respect to follow-up of the thirty-third session of the Statistical Commission, the meeting noted that any necessary collaboration had been carried out and had been covered under this and other agenda items of the meeting.

22. The meeting agreed to propose the inclusion in the multi-year programme of work of the Statistical Commission in 2004, an item entitled "Guidelines on the presentation of statistical data, especially on the Internet", and accepted an offer by OECD to do the preparations for the item, including: (a) preparing an oral statement on the issue at the 2003 session of the Statistical Commission; (b) obtaining input from countries in 2003; (c) preparing a draft document for submission to the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2003; and (d) preparing a document for the Statistical Commission in 2004.

6. Consultative Seminar on Governance of National Statistical Systems

23. The meeting was briefed by IMF on the major conclusions of the Consultative Seminar on Governance of National Statistical Systems (Singapore, 28-30 May 2002), and it agreed to consider at a future meeting the issue of how international agencies can support countries in their efforts to establish effective statistical governance systems.

7. Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange initiative

24. The meeting took note of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange initiative sponsored by six organizations (the Bank for International Settlements, the European Central Bank, EUROSTAT, IMF, OECD and the Statistics Division), to maintain and if necessary develop new electronic standards for their data exchange. It welcomed the invitation of IMF for interested agencies to participate in this dialogue. It agreed on the necessity to consider the item further at its future meetings.

L. How to organize the future coordination of statistical activities

25. The meeting noted that the High-level Committee on Programmes and the Statistical Commission had recognized the need for continuing coordination of statistical activities following the discontinuation of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities as from 31 December 2001. The meeting endorsed the conclusions of the consultative meeting that was held on 7 March 2002 among the international organizations that were present at the Statistical Commission. Those conclusions were as follows:

(a) There was a strong continuing need for coordination of international statistical work;

(b) The coordination work would involve meetings, but would be driven more by needs rather than proceeding according to a fixed schedule;

(c) A better job could be done on coordination, especially by focusing on emerging issues requiring coordination and follow-up of decisions to ensure that action is taken.

26. The meeting decided to establish a Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, the terms of reference of which are set out in annex IV, with comments and changes as follows:

(a) An additional objective of the Committee should be "to foster good practices in the structuring and programming of statistical activities in the international organizations";

(b) The participation of the directors of statistical services or equivalent in the Committee's meetings was considered particularly important for the effectiveness of the Committee's work;

(c) Work done on coordinating activities between meetings and follow-up of decisions are important elements of the work of the Committee, and this work should be reflected in the reports of the Committee to the Statistical Commission;

(d) The formal meetings provide an excellent opportunity for bilateral and multilateral discussions and networking, and time should be set aside in the meeting schedule for such activities;

(e) The Committee should strive for efficiency and effectiveness in its work and should adopt a strong proactive approach to its work;

(f) In principle, it is expected that there will be an annual meeting, but advantage will be taken of the annual session of the Statistical Commission to bring

the Committee together to consider any issues that need to be considered at that time and to reconsider the proposed agenda and need for the next scheduled Committee session;

(g) All documents for the meetings should be distributed well in advance of the meetings;

(h) The secretariat should contact the lead organizations well in advance of a meeting of the Committee to remind them of commitments made;

(i) The reports of the meetings of the Committee should specify the lead organizations that are responsible for action and follow-up.

27. The meeting requested the Statistics Division to prepare terms of reference in line with those comments and changes for the Committee to review.

28. The meeting agreed that the Committee should meet from 9 to 11 September 2003 and adopted a provisional agenda for the meeting (annex V). It also accepted an offer from ILO to host the meeting. In line with paragraph 26 (f) above, the meeting decided that the Committee would also meet in New York at 4 p.m. on Monday, 3 March (the day prior to the start of the Statistical Commission), and requested the secretariat to distribute the provisional agenda for the September meeting prior to that date so as to facilitate consideration of the agenda as well as the need for the session to be held as scheduled.

29. In line with annex IV, paragraph 6, the meeting elected Andrew Flatt of ESCAP as Chairman of the Committee for a period of two years.

Notes

[1] *Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistics Use* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.9); also available on the Internet at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49.htm.

Annex I

Agenda of the Inter-Agency Meeting on Coordination of Statistical Activities

(17-19 September 2002)

1. Opening of the Meeting.
2. Election of Chairman.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Treatment of any unfinished business of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities.
5. Improving the quality of data used for indicators for the millennium development goals and targets:
   (a) Improvement of the general process;
   (b) Harmonization of regional definitions;
   (c) Coordination of global surveys;
   (d) Conceptual and methodological issues.
6. Issues relating to the assessment of the quality of statistical data in developing countries.
7. Quality assurance for statistics in international statistical services.
8. Reducing duplication of data collection from countries.
9. Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter.
10. Coordination in the field of health statistics.
11. Information items:
    (a) Major new initiatives planned by organizations;
    (b) Issues related to the work of the task forces and inter-secretariat working groups;
    (c) Programme review of services statistics for the Statistical Commission for 2003;
    (d) Coordination of development indicators in the context of follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits;
    (e) Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission;
    (f) Singapore Consultative Seminar on Governance;
    (g) Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange Initiative.
12. How to organize the future coordination of statistical activities.
13. Other business.
14. Report of the Meeting.

Annex II

List of participants

United Nations entities and programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs	
Statistics Division	Hermann Habermann Willem F. M. De Vries Mary Chamie Cristina Hannig Robert Johnston Richard Roberts Stefan Schweinfest (Secretary)
Population Division	Larry Heligman
Division for Sustainable Development	Anne Kerr
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	Michael Doyle
Economic Commission for Europe	Lidia Bratanova
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	Andrew Flatt (Chairman)
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	Henri Laurencin
United Nations Development Programme	Haishan Fu Tom Griffin
United Nations Environment Programme	Ashbindu Singh
United Nations Human Settlements Programme	Guenter Karl
United Nations Children's Fund	Gareth Jones Tessa Wardlaw
United Nations Population Fund	Iqbal Alam

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization	Sylvester Young
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	Robert Mayo
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Denise Lievesley Jose Pessoa
World Health Organization	Chris Murray
World Bank	Shaida Badiee
International Monetary Fund	Carol Carson
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	Tetsuo Yamada

Other international and non-governmental organizations

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	Denis Ward
Statistical Office of the European Communities	James Whitworth
World Tourism Organization	Antonio Massieu
World Trade Organization	Roslyn Jackson
Inter-State Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States	Mikhail A. Korolev

Annex III

List of documents

Document No.	*Agenda item*	*Title or description*
SA/2002/1	3	Provisional agenda
SA/2002/2	3	Proposed schedule of discussions
SA/2002/3	4	Treatment of any "unfinished business" of the former Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities: note by the Secretariat
SA/2002/4	5	Improving the quality of data used for indicators for the millennium development goals and targets: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/5	6	Issues relating to the assessment of the quality of statistical data in developing countries: report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
SA/2002/6	7	Quality assurance for statistics in international statistical services: report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SA/2002/6/Add.1	7	Dimensions of statistical quality: note by United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/6/Add.2	7	United Nations Statistics Division data collections and quality procedures: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
-	8	Reducing duplication of data collection from countries: oral report
SA/2002/8	9	Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/9	10	Coordination in the field of health statistics: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/10	11 (a)	Major new initiatives planned by organizations: note by the International Monetary Fund
SA/2002/10/Add.1	11 (a)	Major new initiatives planned by organizations: note by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
SA/2002/10/Add.2	11 (a)	Major new initiatives planned by organizations: note by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
SA/2002/10/Add.3	11 (a)	Major new initiatives planned by organizations: note by the UN-Habitat
SA/2002/10/Add.4	11 (a)	Major new initiatives planned by organizations: note by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SA/2002/11	11 (b)	Inter-secretariat Working Group on Price Statistics: note by the International Labour

Document No.	*Agenda item*	*Title or description*
		Organization
SA/2002/11/Add.1	11 (b)	Task Force on Finance Services: note by the International Monetary Fund
SA/2002/11/Add.2	11 (b)	Task Force on International Trade Statistics: note by the World Trade Organization
SA/2002/12	11 (c)	Programme review of services statistics for the Statistical Commission, 2003: note by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SA/2002/13	11 (d)	Coordination of development indicators in the context of follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/14	11 (e)	Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/14/Add.1	11 (e)	Identifying issues that the Statistical Commission might discuss: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
SA/2002/15	12	How to organize the future coordination of statistical activities: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
A/57/270	5	Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration: report of the Secretary-General
-	5	Millennium indicators: summary of progress at the regional level based on the Secretary-General's report (A/57/270 (annex)): note by the United Nations Statistics Division
-	5	Estimating global slum dwellers
-	11 (e)	United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Scope of Social Statistics: note by the United Nations Statistics Division
-	11 (f)	Summary of the proceedings of the Consultative Seminar on Governance of National Statistical Systems, Singapore, 28-30 May 2002
-	11 (g)	Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange Initiative
-		List of participants

Annex IV

Notes on a proposed inter-agency Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

1. The inter-agency Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities was established on (date) by the (establishing authority). Its objectives, which it takes over from the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities ((a), (b) and (c) below, modified by (d) below) are:

(a) To promote coordination, integration and complementarity among the statistical programmes of the international organizations, including the avoidance of duplication, and reduction in reporting burdens on Member States, and to promote coordination and consistency in statistical practices and development;

(b) To provide coordinated preparations for the treatment of statistical issues in intergovernmental meetings, including the Statistical Commission, and coordinated follow-up of decisions of the intergovernmental bodies, thus providing a responsive focus for addressing the needs of Member States;

(c) To achieve, through the coordination activity, an integrated system in the collection, processing and dissemination of international statistics by promoting the coordination of the international statistical system, including technical cooperation in statistics, and to facilitate the use in Member States of internationally agreed concepts, definitions, recommendations and classifications of different international organizations by coordinating the work on methodological development and promoting harmonization of the methodologies in various fields of statistics;

(d) Within the above framework, to focus on emerging issues requiring coordination and follow-up of decisions to ensure that action is taken.

2. The members of the Committee comprise all members and observers of the former ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, namely, the United Nations Statistics Division, the regional commissions, the United Nations programmes and funds, the specialized agencies and related organizations, certain non-United Nations intergovernmental organizations (the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the World Tourism Organization and the World Trade Organization), regional development banks and the International Statistical Institute. Other organizations can participate by invitation.

3. Representation in the Committee is normally at the level of director of an organization's statistical service or equivalent.

4. The Committee functions on a task-oriented basis using lead agency arrangements.

5. The Committee meets on an ad hoc basis as required by circumstances, usually for two and half days, but the decision to hold meetings and their length is driven by substance and needs, not by schedule.

6. The Committee elects a Chairman who serves for a two-year period and is eligible for re-election for a second two-year term. The Statistics Division is the permanent secretariat.

7. A decisions- and actions-only report is prepared for adoption at the end of each meeting; the report is made available to the United Nations Statistical Commission and, if necessary or desirable, the report is referred to the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

6 August 2002

Annex V

Proposed agenda for the first meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities*

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Terms of reference of the Committee (Statistics Division).
4. Draft guidelines on the presentation of statistical data, especially on the Internet (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development).
5. Good citation practices in the outputs of international statistical offices (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).
6. Statistical data and metadata exchange Initiative (International Monetary Fund).
7. Improving the quality of data used for indicators for the millennium development goals and targets (Statistics Division).
8. Coordination of data sets disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter (Statistics Division).
9. Collection of disaggregated statistics by international organizations (United Nations Children's Fund).
10. Harmonization of base years for index numbers (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development).
11. Strengthening governance of statistical systems (International Monetary Fund).
12. Information items:
    (a) Major new initiatives planned by organizations (all);
    (b) Issues related to the work of the task forces and inter-secretariat working groups (conveners);
    (c) Other matters relating to the Statistical Commission (Statistics Division).
13. Other business.
14. Report of the meeting.

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* The agency responsible for preparing background documentation is indicated in brackets.

United Nations E/CN.3/2003/26

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2002

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Thirty-fourth session
4-7 March 2003
Item 6 (e) of the provisional agenda*
Activities not classified by field: coordination and integration of statistical programmes

Coordination of statistical data collection from countries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session.[a] It describes the efforts of the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with other international organizations, to eliminate duplication in data collection.

Points for conclusion by the Commission are contained in paragraph 6.

Notes

[a] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), para. 80.

* E/CN.3/2003/1.

02-71633 (E) 090103

1. At the request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session,[1] the United Nations Statistics Division requested the 53 national statistical offices that were represented for examples of duplication of statistical data-collection activities practised by international organizations. Eleven countries responded and the replies were reported to the Commission at its thirty-third session (see E/CN.3/2002/30, annex).

2. The former ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities considered the issue at its thirty-fifth session held in Vienna from 18 to 20 September 2001. The lead organizations, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Statistics Division, have investigated each reported instance. The results of that work were reported to the Commission at its thirty-third session.[2]

3. During an inter-agency meeting on the coordination of statistical activities (New York, 17-19 September 2002), the international organizations reconfirmed their commitment to continue working both on the reported examples of data-collection duplication that had not yet been solved and on the issue in general. The newly created Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, successor of the former ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, will serve as the platform for those issues.

4. In some instances, the duplication of data collection has already been eliminated by the organizations involved. For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) agreed to use the labour force and employment data collected by the International Labour Organization to pre-fill its questionnaire, and the United Nations Statistics Division has reached new agreements with ILO and UNESCO on the exchange of national demographic data. In other cases, consultations between relevant organizations and bodies are ongoing.

5. On a more general level, the Division has examined its own data-collection activities. A report entitled "United Nations Statistics Division data collections and quality procedures" is contained in the annex. The Division has also started to systematically review its agreements with other international organizations and with regional organizations on the exchange of national demographic and other data.

6. The Commission may wish to: (a) endorse the approach taken by the Division and the Committee to eliminate specific examples of data-collection duplication; (b) request the Committee to continue working on the issue and report on progress made; and (c) encourage member States to bring instances of duplication of data collection at the international level to the attention of the Division.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 4* (E/2001/24), chap. I, sect. A.

[2] See E/CN.3/2002/30; and background paper entitled "Observations on issues related to coordination of data collection from countries by international organizations and interim report on investigation of incidences notified by countries".

Annex

United Nations Statistics Division data collections and quality procedures

1. The purpose of the present annex is to give a brief overview of the data collections of the United Nations Statistics Division, including descriptions of data-editing procedures and policies.

Data collections

2. The Division runs 19 recurrent data collections (for an itemized list, see appendix).

Periodicity

3. Most of the Division's data collections are annual. The exceptions are:

- Total exports and imports: values and index numbers (monthly).
- Manufactured goods exports and fuel imports (annual, quarterly and monthly).
- Index numbers of industrial production (quarterly).
- Environmental statistics (biennially).

Timeliness

4. The timeliness with which statistics are published[a] is a function of the periodicity of the collection and the nature of the data. For monthly collections, the statistics are released about one to two months after the reference period. For annual collections, the time lag between the reference period and the release date varies from less than one year (*Detailed International Trade Statistics*) to 1 year and 10 months (*Demographic Yearbook Vital Statistics*). Systematic efforts are made to achieve the best possible timeliness, including sending out reminders in various forms, the use of pre-filled questionnaires and supporting the use of different media for data transfer (paper questionnaire, electronic questionnaire, downloads from web sites). More details are provided below.

Intended geographical coverage

5. Intended coverage refers to the specific countries and areas for which data are sought. Most of the Division's data collections intend to cover all (or most) countries/areas of the world (the so-called M49 list).[b] One collection relates to a restricted number of countries, because the subject matter is only relevant for some countries. This applies to manufactured goods exports and fuel imports (44 countries).

Countries or areas from which data are actually collected

6. No data are collected from countries for which another international organization is known to collect the same data. In such cases, the Division obtains the data from that other organization on the basis of a formal or informal data-sharing agreement. In particular, no data are collected from countries from which Eurostat or OECD[c] collect statistics on the same subject matter. In addition, a

variety of international organizations within or outside the United Nations system (or their publications and web sites) are occasionally contacted when data for certain countries or commodities are not available. For example, for industrial statistics, some of the data are obtained from national and international publications, such as the *Chemical Industry Yearbook*, *Lloyds Register of Shipping*, *Lead and Zinc Statistics* and the *International Sugar Yearbook*.

Response rates and completeness of responses

7. While the *intended* geographical coverage was discussed in paragraph 5 above, the *actual* geographical coverage (which countries actually provide data) of Division statistics is a function of response rates. To the extent that data collected by other international organizations are used, coverage clearly also depends on the response rates achieved by those organizations.

8. In addition to geographical coverage, substantive coverage (the completeness of the response by countries) is also an important issue. For several data collections, the response (mostly by developing countries) is unsatisfactory, either geographically or substantively or both. However, the situation is very diverse. The information below relates to the latest reference period for which the data collection has been closed and refers to *Division questionnaires only*:

- *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*: 25 per cent response rate (Europe very good, Africa very poor).
- *National Accounts Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables*: actual coverage is almost 60 per cent of the countries and 95 per cent of GDP (response rates for Africa and small island developing States are very poor).
- *Demographic Yearbook Vital Statistics*: 55 countries provided all or most of the requested data, 36 countries provided some data and 132 did not respond.
- *Demographic Yearbook*: population estimates: 49 countries provided all or most of the data, 27 countries provided some data and 147 did not respond.
- *Detailed International Trade Statistics*: 125 countries supplied all or most of the data, 50 supplied some data, 25 did not respond.
- *Direction of Trade*: 30 (out of 80) countries supplied all requested data, 50 did not respond.
- *Manufactured Goods Exports and Fuel Imports*: 50 per cent of the countries provided complete data, 25 per cent partial data.
- *Total Imports and Exports*: values and index numbers: only 30 per cent of the countries provided partial information.
- *Environmental Statistics*: about 70 countries submitted partial information.
- *Energy Statistics*: about 35 per cent of the countries submitted partial information (Africa 24 per cent, Asia/Middle East/Oceania 70 per cent, Americas and the Caribbean 50 per cent).
- *Industrial Commodity Production*: roughly half of the countries submit data.
- *Index Numbers of Industrial Production*: 50-60 per cent of the countries submit data.

Sources of data collection

9. In paragraph 6 above, some general information was given about the various data sources used by the Division. For the Division's own data collections from countries, national statistical offices are the principal data providers. In some cases, data are provided by central banks. Occasionally, a ministry or another government organization provides the data, either through the national statistical office or directly to the Division. In the case of international trade statistics, national customs organizations are the respondents for some countries. For national accounts, apart from countries, some of the data are obtained from a variety of other sources, including regional development banks and organizations, such as the secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) or the *International Financial Statistics* publication of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Data-sharing agreements

10. To avoid duplication, the Division has a number of data-sharing agreements with other international organizations. Apart from the general principle (discussed several times in ACC) that international organizations agree to contribute data for the *Statistical Yearbook* when required, there are other formal agreements to share or jointly collect data. Joint questionnaires exist for the following Division collections:

- For national accounts (analysis of main aggregates), a joint United Nations Statistics Division/Eurostat/the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) questionnaire has been used for a long time.
- For energy statistics, there is a joint United Nations Statistics Division/OECD/International Energy Agency questionnaire.
- For the *Demographic Yearbook*/vital statistics and population estimates, there is a joint United Nations Statistics Division/Eurostat questionnaire.

11. Formal data-sharing agreements without a joint questionnaire exist for:

- National accounts (analysis of main aggregates), with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.
- National accounts (detailed tables), with OECD, Eurostat and ECE.
- Environment statistics, with OECD, FAO, Eurostat and the United Nations Environment Programme.
- Detailed international trade statistics, with OECD.

12. Informal data-sharing agreements exist for:

- National accounts, with ADB, CIS, CARICOM, the Eastern Caribbean Community Bank.
- Energy statistics, with the Latin American Energy Organization.
- *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, with the International Civil Aviation Organization, IMF and *Lloyds Register of Shipping*.

- Detailed international trade statistics, with ECLAC and FAO.
- The total exports/imports; values/index numbers collection is complementary to the related IMF publications.

Data collection instruments

13. As mentioned before, the Division uses various forms of data-collection instruments, based on what is most convenient for organizations and countries, as well as efficient for the further data-editing and dissemination process within the Division. Most data collections use a variety of instruments. The most important instruments are:

- Paper questionnaires, sometimes pre-filled (when this is relevant) with information the Division has from the previous reference period (this is done for energy statistics, environment statistics and industrial commodity production statistics).
- Electronic questionnaires (sometimes pre-filled) that can be returned by e-mail.
- Countries or organizations transmit their databases (e.g., on CD-ROM) to the Division (for detailed international trade statistics and national accounts, this is the most important instrument of data collection).
- Countries send printed or electronic publications to the Division.
- The Division downloads data from Internet sites.
- The Division gathers information from printed national or international publications.

14. For most data collections, to the extent that data are collected from *countries*, paper questionnaires continue to be important.

Metadata

15. In order to be able to properly understand the data that the Division receives from countries, metadata are indispensable. Therefore, metadata are requested explaining:

- Methods used (concepts, definitions, classifications), particularly to identify differences between national methods and international recommendations and classifications.
- Sources of base data.
- Explanations about specific figures when appropriate (footnotes).
- Information on conversion factors and exchange rates, when appropriate.
- Methods used for estimates and adjustments.

16. For international trade statistics in particular, it is essential to have information about national classifications of commodities, countries/areas, as well as about the trade system used (general or special), valuations (cost, insurance, freight/free on board etc.) and the exact definitions of partner countries (country of origin, consignment, final destination etc.).

Completeness and quality of metadata that is received

17. While in some cases the metadata received are satisfactory, often countries fail to report about changes in methods, definitions and classifications. As a rule, when necessary metadata are missing, countries are contacted. However, many countries do not respond adequately to requests for metadata. Generally, metadata for OECD countries are of a better quality than metadata for developing countries.

Data processing and editing procedures

18. The typical data-editing process at the Division is organized in two steps: (a) "manual" checking of individual country questionnaires and records; and (b) after the data have been uploaded to a database, both manual and electronic checking, both of data from individual countries and of aggregate tabulations. The checking and editing procedures described below are typically applied.

19. For paper questionnaires, where appropriate, the following procedures apply:

- Coding of lines and cells.
- Numerical checks (do data add up to totals etc.).
- Internal consistency checks (do corresponding data match, e.g., in the national accounts questionnaire).
- Logical checks (does value A seem plausible in view of related value B).

20. For data in a database, some of the checks of the previous step are repeated. In addition, the following checks are applied:

- Checks against data on previous periods.
- Checks of aggregate tabulations.

21. More specifically, attention is given to:

- (*Demographic Yearbook*) Dealing with backward revisions by countries.
- (International trade) Completeness of data, conversion of country code to United Nations standards, conversion of national currency to United States dollars, conversion of quantities to metric values (where possible), unit values checks against previous years.
- (Index of industrial production) Recoding to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Revision 3.

22. To handle inconsistencies and improbable values that cannot simply be corrected, the country is contacted for clarification. If there is no (timely) reply, decisions are made on the basis of experience: either the data are taken as they are (with the footnote "As received by national authorities") or they are left out (with an explanatory footnote). As a general rule, the Division does not make estimates for missing values or replaces unlikely data. In a few cases, however, (*Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, *Index of Industrial Production*, *Direction of Trade*) outliers, anomalies or missing values are replaced by either Division estimates or data from other sources.

Notes

[a] Made available electronically; printed versions of the publication are issued much later.

[b] "Standard country or area codes for statistical use" (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/49/Rev.4); it lists about 230 countries and areas.

[c] In some cases, in addition to their member States, Eurostat or OECD also collect data from non-member countries.

Appendix

United Nations Statistics Division statistical data collections, by branch and periodicity

The list set out below enumerates all statistical data-collection activities involving national or international external sources of any kind. Data collections solely based on internal United Nations Statistics Division sources are not included.

1. **Statistical Yearbook (SYB)**
Annual
Statistical Services Branch

SYB presents (in print and on CD-ROM) over 400 statistical series in more than 80 tables on a wide range of social, economic and environmental concerns. Topics covered include: agriculture, forestry and fishing, balance of payments, culture and communication, development assistance, education and literacy, energy, environment, finance, health, nutrition, international merchandise trade, international tourism, labour force, manufacturing, national accounts, population and human settlements, science and technology, intellectual property, transport, and wages and prices. The CD-ROM version contains data from 1980 to the latest available year; the tables in the printed version cover a maximum of 10 years.

2. **World Statistics Pocketbook (WSP)**
Annual
Statistical Services Branch

WSP covers 57 key indicators in the areas of population, economic activity, agriculture, industry, energy, international trade, transport, communications, gender, education and environment, drawn from over 20 international statistical sources. The layout provides an easy-to-view comprehensive statistical profile for 209 countries.

3. **Monthly Bulletin of Statistics (MBS)**
Monthly
Statistical Services Branch

MBS presents (in print and online) current monthly economic statistics for most of the countries and territories of the world. In addition, each month a selection of special tables shows annual and/or quarterly data on subjects illustrating important economic trends and developments. Topics covered include: population, industrial production indices, price indices, manpower, energy commodities, iron ore production, transport, construction, international merchandise trade and finance.

4. **Main Aggregates and Detailed Tables (MAT NA)**
Annual
Economic Statistics Branch

Statistics on national accounts aggregates and detailed variables, such as gross domestic product (GDP), national income, savings, household and government consumption, and exports and imports.

5. **Analysis of Main Aggregates (AMA NA)**
Annual
Economic Statistics Branch

Focuses on summary GDP data, which are presented in the form of analytical tables, for about 210 countries and areas in the world. Most data are extracted from the MAT questionnaires; they are supplemented by estimates made by other international organizations.

6. **Vital Statistics (DVS DYB)**
Annual
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch

This questionnaire consists of 31 tables on vital statistics, including live births by month of birth, legitimacy, sex, and duration of marriage; live-birth order; age of mother and father; and birth weight and gestational age. Next, it requests abridged life-table and complete life-table values. The next part of the questionnaire focuses on deaths by month of death, age, sex, urban and rural areas, marital status and occupation. Statistics on infant deaths are requested by month of death and age and sex. Statistics on late foetal deaths are requested by age of mother, legitimacy, total birth order and period of gestation. Data on legally induced abortions by age and number of previous live births of mother are also requested. Statistics on marriages are collected by month of marriage, previous marital status of bride and groom, age of bride and groom, and age and previous marital status of bride and groom. Data on divorces are requested by duration of marriage, number of dependent children, and age of husband and wife and duration of marriage.

7. **Population Estimates (DPE DYB)**
Annual
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch

This questionnaire consists of four tables requesting basic population statistics: de facto population estimates by age, sex, marital status and urban/rural residence as of mid-year, and de facto population estimates of the capital and cities of 100,000 or more inhabitants, latest available year.

8. **Migration (DMI DYB)**
Annual
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch

The questionnaire consists of three tables: major categories of international departures and arrivals, long-term emigrants and immigrants by country of intended long-term residence or by country of last long-term residence, and long-term emigrants and immigrants by age and sex.

9. **Population characteristics (DPC DYB)**
Annual
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch

The questionnaire consists of 18 tables, including population of major civil divisions by urban/rural residence, population in localities by size-class of locality and sex, and data on population of national capital and other principal cities with population of 100,000 or more. In addition, data are requested on households, population in

households and number of family nuclei by size of household and number of persons living in households. The next part requests data on population by single years of age, five-year age groups, sex, marital status and urban/rural areas; native and foreign-born population by age, sex, country of birth and duration of stay; population 10 years of age and over by literacy, age and sex; population 15 years of age and over by educational attainment, age and sex; and population 5 to 24 years of age by school attendance, single years of age and sex. Data on female population 15 years of age and over by age and number of children born alive by urban/rural areas are also requested, as well as female population 15 years of age and over by age and number of children living by urban/rural areas. The final tables requests data on population by: citizenship, national and/or ethnic group, religion and language and sex.

10. Economically Active Population (DEA DYB)
Annual
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch

The questionnaire consists of eight tables covering population by type of activity, age and sex; population not economically active by functional categories, age and sex; economically active population by industry, occupation, age and sex; economically active foreign-born population by occupation, age and sex; economically active population by status, industry, occupation, age and sex; and female population by type of activity, age and marital status.

11. Households (DHO DYB)
Annual
Demographic and Social Statistics Branch

The questionnaire consists of nine tables, including population by age, sex and type of household; households by age, sex and marital status of head of household; population by number of persons in household; and households by type of household, number of household members and presence of spouse by age and sex of head.

12. Detailed International Trade Statistics (DIT)
Annual
International Trade Statistics Branch

Value and quantity of imports and exports by commodity and within commodities the partner countries, national currency.

13. Direction of Trade Statistics (DOT)
Annual
International Trade Statistics Branch

Total value of imports by country of origin and total value of exports by country of final destination; national currency; annual.

14. Manufactured Goods Exports/Fuel Imports (MGE)
Annual, quarterly, monthly
International Trade Statistics Branch

Manufactured goods exports value, unit value index, quantum index, fuel imports, value, unit value index, quantum index.

15. Total exports/imports; values/index numbers (TEI)
Annual, quarterly, monthly
International Trade Statistics Branch

Total value of imports and exports, unit value and quantum indices.

16. Environmental Statistics (ENS)
Biennial
Environment, Energy and Industrial Statistics Branch

ENS aims to collect a comprehensive set of major environmental variables and indicators in the fields of water resources and pollution, air emissions and quality, waste generation and treatment, and land use and degradation. The data collection includes all those countries that are not covered by data-collection efforts of OECD and Eurostat.

17. Energy Statistics (ERS)
Annual
Environment, Energy and Industrial Statistics Branch

ERS contains energy statistics on more than 215 countries and areas relating to production, trade and both intermediate and final consumption for primary and secondary conventional, non-conventional and new and renewable sources of energy. Data on heating (calorific) values are also provided in order to enable conversions to common units (tera-joules, coal equivalent and oil equivalent) for inter-fuel comparisons.

18. Industrial Commodity Production Statistics (ICP)
Annual
Environment, Energy and Industrial Statistics Branch

ICP contains annual data on production of industrial commodities, by all establishments engaged in mining, manufacturing and electricity gas and water supply, for all the countries of the world. The commodities selected belong to the "List of selected products and materials" (Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 54, part II), which contains about 530 commodities. The list of commodities is coded according to ISIC, Rev.2.

19. Index Numbers of Industrial Production
Quarterly
Environment, Energy and Industrial Statistics Branch

INI provides index numbers of world industrial production on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. They are published in the *Statistical Yearbook* and *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*. The indices indicate trends in value added in constant United States dollars. They provide information for the following categories of industrial activity: mining and its divisions; manufacturing and its divisions or combinations of divisions; electricity, gas and water supply, defined and classified in terms of ISIC, Rev.3.